

*Morals from the Churchyard;
in a Series of Cheerful Fables*

Edward Caswall

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MORALS
FROM THE CHURCHYARD.





THE LITTLE CHILD'S GRAVE

p 14

MORALS
FROM THE CHURCHYARD;

IN

A SERIES OF CHEERFUL FABLES.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY H. K. BROWNE.

“ Listen to the voice of the graves ; they are our true moralists.”
OLD AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.

THE object of this allegory is to exhibit a moral estimate of human pursuits in a new point of view, for the amusement and instruction of the young. The Author has endeavoured to write it in the simplest manner, and sincerely trusts that there will be found nothing objectionable in his attempt to throw a cheerful air over the churchyard, which is too often rendered an object of disgust to the young. At the same time, his principal aim has

been to draw from his subject this grand moral, “that nothing can stand the test of the grave, but religion and virtue.” And if he has chosen fables for the vehicle, it was because he is satisfied that fables are more pleasing to the young than any other mode of instruction.

E. C.

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PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

SHOWING THE ORIGIN OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE GRAVES,
AND THE GOOD ADVICE OF THE OLD GRAVE.

THERE had been, for a long time, a dispute between the graves, as to which was the most worthy: for the grave of the rich man preferred itself to the grave of the poor man; and the grave which had been watered with many tears preferred itself to the grave of the friendless, which had received no tear. At last, on a summer evening, when the stars were just beginning to glimmer, and the mother-owl had led her young ones forth from the

ivy for the first time, an old grave, of sage experience, thus addressed his fellows:—"My friends," said he, "you well know that I am the oldest of you all. My turf is close and short with age. The sexton himself does not know when I was made. Listen, then, to me for a moment, and hearken to the voice of experience. Wherefore should there for ever be disputes among us concerning the most worthy? Let us come to an agreement. Let each of us, in order, give his claims to be considered the most worthy: so, when he has spoken, his brethren shall give judgment upon him, and the truth shall be made clear, whether he be worthy or unworthy. Thus peace shall be restored to this green churchyard; its angels and archangels shall be no more disturbed."

Thus spoke the old grave from his place under the yew, and the other graves agreed to his words,

for each made sure that he should be judged the best: moreover, there had been no funeral for some time, so that the graves had but little for conversation. Now, too, it was the latter part of June, when the graves are in their best humour; for the angels of summer had caused many small flowers to spring up about the churchyard, and the soft dew of night had enlivened the grass with a pleasant verdure. There was a gentle breeze also singing at intervals its dirges from the old yew; and albeit the nightingale came not nigh to the graves, yet did the hooting of the owls delight them more exceedingly than the sweetest of her honeyed notes. Nor did they less rejoice from their calm resting-place, in the creaking of the weather-cock, which ever and anon shifted backwards and forwards in the quiet of night, touched by the invisible wings of the wind.

Thus then they determined, but spoke no more that evening. Meanwhile the shadow from the quaint ivied tower moved round with the moon, till it settled on the old grave, wavering about as wavered the branches of the yew.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF THE OLD GRAVE.

No sooner had the evening-star begun to rise on the next day's eve, (for the graves are silent while the sun shines,) than the old grave, being asked by the others to tell his history, spoke thus, in a low voice, which could not reach the sharpest ear of mortal. "My friends," said he, "I pretend not to be the most worthy among you, nevertheless as you wish me to speak first, I will begin my history at once. Know, then, that although I am now sunk so low in the ground as scarce to be seen by passers-by, time was when I was bound with fresh swathes of blackberry, like the youngest of

you. I am the grave of him who planted this yew more than four centuries ago. It is now, as you perceive, of a huge size, with many large twisted knots in its trunk; and the ground is ever red with the sheddings of its leaves. But when I first knew it, it was small and delicate, so that the children, who now play beneath it, might then have crushed it with one foot. I watched it from spring to spring as it grew; but it was not till the first generation had gone by, that it began to be a tree. When the sons of those who had seen it planted in their childhood, were too old to walk to the churchyard, then did it begin to appear like a young tree; and when the great-grandchildren of these had died, then, for the first time, was a small seat made under it. About this time a new people came, who used no incense in their prayers. Soon afterwards the owls began to build

in the ivy which climbs round our tower, where they have remained ever since, although, when the lightning struck it, they had determined to leave it.

“ At this time there were many other graves in the church-yard besides myself; but since then, all of them have been removed to make way for new graves. For man considers not how each grave yearns to remain over its own body, but, without feeling, separates them in a little while after they are joined : thus were the other graves removed one by one, and I alone remain of those past generations. Meanwhile ye, my friends, graves of later date, have sprung up in their place ; but, like man himself, ye too must all make way in your turn, as happened only a year ago, when the little grave by the path side was turned up to make way for the grave of the rich man. I too, who have

survived so long, must soon pass away ; for I heard the sexton yesterday say to himself, that there would be a death in the parish ere long, and that the new grave should be somewhere under the old yew. Thus have I told you my history ; and behold, if the angel of the brook which runs at the foot of this hill would speak, he would tell you the same ; for from the first of my days hath he known me, since from spring to autumn, and from autumn to spring, I have delighted in listening to the voice of his stream from between the rushes, which is now loud, and now soft, as it is swelled by the falling rains of heaven. Ask also of the other angels who tenant this spot, and they will tell you that I speak true." Thus ended the old grave, and the other graves thanked him exceedingly, and decided that he was very worthy.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROUD SPEECH OF THE RICH MAN'S GRAVE.

BUT the grave of the rich man, concerning which the old grave had spoken, was in the middle of the churchyard, and close by the path. This grave was more gaudy than the other graves ; for of them many had only a small tombstone, and the most no tombstone at all ; but the grave of the rich man had a square tomb of hewn stone, which was carved over in many parts, and cunningly gilt by the workman. The little children touched it not in their play, for iron railings went round it, and made it safe ; therefore did the rich man's grave pride itself in its heart, and of its

own accord began thus, when the old grave had done speaking:—"My neighbours, if I ever said that I was more worthy than the rest of you, be assured that I said it not without cause; for, first, consider who it is that I cover. Truly we saw him not here on Sundays; yet ye have heard from the gossips who talk here, that his coach was of purple, his lands broad, his house rich with crimson and gold. When he was buried, his hearse waved with black plumes; dumb mourners followed behind. Consider also myself. Behold my gilt letters! behold my pedestal and the urn at the top. As for my coffin, it resembled not yours; it was covered with smooth black cloth; it was fastened with silver pins; of silver was its plate, with the inscription. Give, then, your vote for me, and agree among yourselves for ever that I am the most worthy of you."

Thus haughtily spoke the rich man's grave ; but his words created a murmur among the other graves—a low murmur, like to the waving of grass in a summer meadow ; for the graves brooked not to be prided over by him. And the old grave answered and said—“ My friends, this rich man, when he lived, was not loved by any ; he spoke no kind word to his neighbour ; his wealth was spent on himself alone ; his servants feared him ; the beggar turned from his door.

“ Did ye never hear of the small thatched cottage by the stream side, where dwelt an old man and his wife ? The old man sat by the door ; his wife spun at the window. They were comfortable in their old age ; but the rich man wanted a large garden ; so he pulled down the old man's cottage, where he had lived thirty years ; and the

rich man had a large garden, but the old man and his wife became beggars. Judge, then, if the rich man's grave be equal to us ; for over thee, oh thou rich man's grave, no tear hath been shed ! but the most of us have received, at the least, one tear. Thou, indeed, hast gilt letters, but affection passeth by thy gilt letters to ponder over ours of mean degree. The stranger alone is enticed by the glitter to thy side, that he may read for idleness ; but, behold ! over us little children do come and sit down, lisping names which shall be remembered when thou art no more."

Thus spoke the old grave against the grave of the rich man, which answered not, for well knew the rich man's grave that the words which he spoke were true : so he mourned within himself, and said—" Oh that I had been the grave of a

poor good man, rather than the grave of a proud rich man ; for then would the angels have visited me also, and decked me out, year by year, with fresh flowers ! ”

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORY OF THE LITTLE CHILD'S GRAVE.

Now, in a corner of the churchyard, under the stone wall, and by the side of a China rose, was a young child's grave. A little grave it was, lying by itself; yet was there a small path up to it; for the child's mother oftentimes came thither in secret of an evening, when the place was still. Many daisies also grew upon it, for, albeit the mother knew it not, yet did many young angels consort thither, bringing live daisies, which they love, and causing them to blow in the same place many times over again. This little grave was loved by the old grave under the yew, for he per-

ceived how it was visited by angels; therefore he bade it speak to the other graves, that they might learn its excellence. So the little grave spoke and said—"Behold, I am the last made of you all, and ignorant of many things! yet do the angels visit me, and oftentimes I hear the rustling of their wings about me. I am the resting-place of young Christian innocence. My tenant, gathered like a virgin rose, felt not the blight of the world ere it died. Sweet was the last sigh of the little Christian on his mother's breast; pleasant his smile, as he sank smoothly away without a stain. Remember ye not his baptism at the holy font, and the sacred cross on his small forehead? How tenderly his mother bore him along to his second birth. She folded him close in her arms, close from the rude wind. The angels followed behind unseen. Now his young limbs are decayed; his

bright blue eye has been eaten by worms ; therefore do, mortals, blame me, who cover so sweet a thing ; albeit, in truth, I am nothing else than the garner of its immortality ; for the time shall come when the graves shall be opened, and then I also, who am but a little grave, will reveal my treasure. Judge, then, if I be not equal with you, inasmuch as I am the grave of innocence."

Thus spoke the little grave ; but the other graves answered and said, " The grave of innocence is a worthy grave, but innocence which hath never been tempted, equalleth not the innocence which hath survived temptation. Justly, then, do the angels deck thee with daisies ; yet more justly would be decked the grave of one, who, after much tribulation had reached heaven." And the old grave said, " My friends, I remember the little child. His mother carried him about. She made

for him a red cloak. When it was summer his sister drew him along in a little cart. His face bloomed with health, the glad promise of many years. He knew not the meaning of a grave. But God took him to himself: so the little child died. Yet does the mother take care of the cart still, and the little red cloak hangs on the peg."

Thus spoke the old grave: and now the cock crowed the rising of morn, and the owls had gone back to their nests with young mice from the barn. So the graves ceased from talking, and gave place to man and his toils, concerning whom, as morn came on, thus meditated the old grave. "Oh, man! wherefore art thou so foolish! Behold, each animal seeks its end but thee. Madly dost thou go on, forgetful of us who patiently wait for thee; forgetful of thy companions, who are already come unto us. Nay, thou not only neglectest us, but

hatest us also, for which thou hast no cause. For behold, do we not warn thee like a friend? Do we not advise thee in a low voice, which thou canst hear if thou wilt? Oh that thou wouldest make friends with us now, since, at all events, thou must come to us in the end!"

CHAPTER V.

THE SABBATH.

SOFTLY came on the next day's eve, ministered with dew by the angels. The flowers closed their leaves one by one; the children left off their play by the tombs; the swallows glided no more round the tower, for the insects had gone to their homes; the sounds of the village died away by degrees, and now the last team had gone by towards the farmer's yard, when the old grave said, "My friends, is it not the eve before the sabbath? let us sing in its honour." So the graves sang in honour of the sabbath, and said, "Pleasant is the eve before the sabbath, very pleasant to the graves.

For then the worm ceases from its repast for a while ; the lizard creeps to his hole ; a brighter green runs round the graves ; the birds grow more tame. Pleasant is the eve before the sabbath, and sweet to man is the sleep which it brings ; for well he knows that on the next day he shall have rest.

Oh man ! thou creature of many labours ! Thou stranger ! who comest on the earth and passest away in a little while ! thou, who livest on futile hopes, and makest thy life a toil ! rejoice in the coming of rest, rejoice in the eve of the sabbath ! Snatch the peace which is offered to thee. A short time, and there cometh upon thee again the fever of life and the flush of labour, till thou leavest life for once and ever, and reposest quietly in our silent cells. Quiet, most quiet are our cells. Let thy sabbath be like unto them, in quiet : for it is

the grave of the week past, wherein are buried its cares and its turmoils."

Thus sang the graves till morn, when the angels of the churchyard took up the strain. "Pleasant is the sabbath dawn, very pleasant to the angels; for then to their eyes the earth grows to the seeming of Paradise. Trees of life spring up on all sides; rivers of eternity gush forth in plenty: but most beautiful of all on that day is the village churchyard. Behold, we have strewn it with garlands from Eden; we have hung chains of amaranth from tree to tree. Roses are thick on its paths, everlasting roses from heaven. The fragrance of Paradise is breathed about. The sun warms the graves; they have no gloom in our eyes on this day. The righteous shall behold them, and rejoice. We have been also inside the church. We have chased away the many-footed crawling

insects. The old bible is in its place ; we have kept it safe and undefiled. All is ready for the minister ; let him come in his white robes. We also will listen."

So the time came for church ; and the angel of the sabbath took his stand by the porch, and watched the people as they came to church. And first there passed by an old woman from the alms-house, having an ague, and shivering exceedingly ; concerning whom the angel said within himself, " Oh, old woman, I thank thee, for thou doest God's day honour." Then came two little children, hand in hand, holding a prayer-book between them ; and the angel said, " Ye also do I thank, my little ones : I will tell of you in Paradise." So they passed by, and a young man came, finely dressed, with a careless look, for he knew not that the angel of the sabbath was by ; but of him the



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angel said, " Oh young man, I thank thee not, for thou doest God's day no honour, not having a spirit of reverence." Many more also passed by, whom the angel noted. And there came an old man, with the burden of seventy years : a little maid walked at his side, very fair to behold, for her hair was golden, and her eyes like to the sky in the depths of their blueness. Tenderly she held the old man, like a young vine ; and they walked together into the church, and the angel said, " Thanks to you also, old man and young maid ; your humility pleases me." So the church was filled with people, and last of all the angels followed also. They listened to the minister ; they joined their voices with the young children who sang, for the angels love young children ; and behold, if a man could have heard their melody, he would have deemed himself in heaven. But none may hear

that strain save the babes when they are christened, and the righteous when they die. And when the service was ended the angels sang thus among themselves, "Glory to the church of Christ, the old church, the church of ages. Saints for ever are its martyrs; saints before the throne of God. Are we not its secret ministers, each in his place, angel and archangel?"

In such manner sang the angels till the bats came from their holes, and the evening star led forth her companions over the darkening sky.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOTHER'S GRAVE.

Now the old grave had watched the aged man and the little maid as they left the church ; for they went not home at once, but stayed beside a grave which lay beneath a holly in a quiet corner. And the little maid said, " This is the grave of my mother," and she stooped down and kissed the grass of the grave. But the old man wept ; and the little maid took him by the hand and said, " Oh grandfather, why do you weep ? Pleasant is the sleep of my mother. The wild bees murmur softly over her grave ; sweetly also do the little birds sing from the green branches. My father

was buried in the sea, which is far away ; but this grave is close to us : we may visit it daily."

Thus spoke the little maid, and they two went away, and were seen no more by the old grave. So when the sun was set, he spoke to the other graves, and said, " Which of you knows the story of the old man and the little maid ? I am desirous to know concerning them." And the grave which had been kissed by the little maid, answered and said, " My friends, the story is short. Know you not the small white cottage on the other side of the way ? There dwell the little maid and her grandfather, with the white hair. An orphan she is, without father or mother : blind is her grandfather. She leads him about in the green lanes ; she sings to him as he sits at the cottage door. With her needle she works for him at spare times, sitting on a small stool at his side ; but sometimes

she brings her stool hither, for I am her mother's grave. Dearly she loves me. She planted me with primroses in spring; she talks to me when no one is by: thus I am the grave of maternal love. Judge of me as ye please; but consider, I pray you, what is my worth, how great is my treasure. For when a mother dies, who shall supply her face by the fire-side? and her love, what can compare with it? Happy, very happy among children, are they who have a mother's love. Pleasant is their childhood, and remembered when other things are passed from their mind: they nestle safe from trouble. As the spring which rises in this churchyard by the side of the old sundial, makes the grass green where it trickles, even so is the well of a mother's love; for it makes green the path of childhood, and gives a freshness to middle age." Thus spoke the mother's grave, and

the other graves decided that it was the worthiest of all who had yet spoken. But the old grave said, "Pity the little maid who has no mother; pity her sad case. She would give all in the world for one smile of a mother's love."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAVES OF TWO LOVERS.

Not far from the grave of the rich man were two graves lying side by side. Over them both grew one cypress, the most melancholy of the trees. To these graves oftentimes came the young men and maidens of the village to plight their troth. For here were two lovers buried: therefore, of all the graves in the churchyard did these two consider themselves to be the most worthy. And now when the little maid's story had been told, thus began they.

“Behold ! are we not worthy to be ranked high amongst you ? For, consider what is the treasure

which we hold. What treasure is so great as love, which is here buried? Ask of the cypress if it be not so. Why else does he mourn so piteously? We are the graves of two lovers. Remember ye not what the angels told us concerning them in their lifetime. How pleasant was the honeysuckle which shaded her door! How sweet the jessamine which climbed round her window! Yet was her voice more pleasant than the jessamine, and her smile sweeter than the honeysuckle. Soft was her eye to the poor, softer than the south breeze. Dearly her mother loved her; her mother the widow. Her companions delighted in her step. But dearer than all was she to him who sleeps beside her. How often did he come to behold her window? He made for her an arbour in the grove. He made for her a little seat, when they were young. He cut her name on the smooth



THE TWO LOVERS

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beech by the hill, and, behold! as the angels tell us, her name is there still. But she is gone. She is no more. Gently she died, like a young lamb. Her friends mourned a little while. Her mother wept hot tears. Her lover wept not at first: ye saw him stand by her coffin, as it went down. Slowly it went down; for the sexton had dug deep. He went his way for a short time, and came back in a shroud. Now they lie side by side. They are parted no more. Rightly, then, was the cypress planted over us: and since, of all treasures on earth, love is the greatest treasure, great is our worth who have beneath us love buried."

Thus spoke the two graves, and waited to be proclaimed the most worthy. But the old grave, under the yew, spoke, and said:—"The grave of love is, indeed, a worthy grave; for

therein, of earthly passions, is buried the most excellent. Nevertheless, how can ye say that it is the most worthy? For consider, how earthly love lasts but a little while! How soon passes away the bloom of youth; after which, such love as this fades of itself into a shadow, and is no more. If ye desire the grave of love, which is the most worthy, search among you for the grave of heavenly love, which grows strong with years, and warms with the frost of age. So shall your dispute be settled for ever."

Thus answered the old grave. But as yet no such love was found; for heavenly love is a scarce thing among men. So silence fell on the churchyard, and no more words were spoken that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRAVES BESEECH THE ANGELS TO BRING SOME
RAIN.

AND it was the time of the dog-star. For five days there had been no rain. The graves pined for want of moisture. "Behold!" said they, "our grass is drying up with the scorching of summer. The scent of the dead rises up from below. Let us speak to the angels, who minister rain to us, lest the sun burn us up."

Thus spoke the graves, all but the mother's grave; for the little maid had come with a water-pot daily, and watered the flowers on her mother's grave: so that its grass was green, green and

fresh as the grass of spring. And when the angels had heard the cry of the graves, they answered, and said—"Ye shall have rain. Are we not the ministers of Providence, who take care of the farmer's field, sending it moisture when it is dry? Dear to us, also, is the grass of this churchyard, and the green leaves on its trees."

So the angels went, and sought the sky for a soft cloud. Many clouds they passed, till they met the angel of the south breeze, unto whom they said: "Bring us a soft cloud; oh, friend! a soft cloud, fresh from the spicy countries."

And the angel went, and brought a cloud, and said, "This is the cloud for you. From Araby it rose, rich with the scent of pale roses. It is dyed with the violet; its colours shift with the sun. A fair cloud it is, and full of nutriment: take and do with it what ye will."

So the angels took the cloud, and tied it with small chains, and drew it along till it came over the churchyard: then they said to it, "Oh, cloud, dissolve quickly into rain at our bidding, and water the churchyard."

So the cloud dissolved at their word. And, first, only a few small drops fell through the air, each of which, as it fell, was guided by an angel; one into the shrivelled leaf of the beech, another upon the faint daisy, and a third upon the weak blade of young grass. Then, by degrees, did the drops thicken more and more, till the sky was filled with pearly streams. The leaves danced to and fro with a pleasant sound, and the little pebbles hopped on the path with the dropping of the rain. A steam of sweet odours rose from the grass. The web of the spider was broken in twain. The ladybird sought her inner cave, in the hollow

of the harebell ; but the grasshopper came forth from his hole. Ten thousand drops sparkled over the grass ; but of them all there fell not one unguided by an angel. Meanwhile, high up in the heavens, the covenant bow of many colours took its stand, betokening God's promise in past times. At all which the graves rejoiced greatly, and said, " Many thanks we give to you, O angels ! for this pleasant shower ; and for the rainbow which you have brought. Our thirst is quenched with the rich wine from heaven. The smell of death shall taint us no more."

CHAPTER IX.

VISIT OF THE BUTTERFLY TO THE CHURCHYARD.

So the churchyard was green again, and the insects were happy. And about the middle of the next day, there came a butterfly into the churchyard, enticed by the freshness—a butterfly, the most beautiful of all that had ever come ; for its wings were of purple and gold ; silver down decked its body ; it glittered in the sun like a winged diamond. And when it was come, it rested first on one grave, and then on another, fluttering about in the gladness of its soul. For it knew not that there were dead men beneath the graves, but beheld only the grass which grew on the outside. And

presently there came by three little children, and beheld the butterfly, and ran after it; and one of them caught it, and held it fast. But the little maid, the orphan, saw them, and ran to them, and said, "Consider, I pray you, this beautiful thing, how it has a home, like as we have—a soft home somewhere in the green leaves. Its wings are tender as dust. If you hold it longer it will no more be able to fly. Be kind, then, and let it go to its home. Have not I also let go my young dove, which the woodman brought me, because I knew that it had a home?" So the children let the butterfly go. And it rose up into the sky, and fluttered away over the church.

All this the graves perceived. So when night came again, one said to another, "Saw you how the beautiful butterfly was saved by the young maiden? Doubtless it thanked her greatly. Be-

held you ever so bright a thing? There never came so fair a butterfly before to this churchyard." But the old grave answered and said, " My friends, this very butterfly do I remember to have been born in this place ; for it was once a poor chrysalis, and hung down from the bough over me by a delicate thread. It had no beauty at that time, being shut up in a close shroud. The winds swung it about. The rain and hail pelted it. It was despised. But behold ! one morning it left its place, clad in burnished wings, and soared into the air. Now it floats from flower to flower. It is admired by all the insects. Its hues shame the pride of kings. Let man learn of the butterfly. For such as it was, so are the despised of this world."

CHAPTER X.

THE MONUMENT OF HIGH BIRTH.

THUS spoke the old grave: and now the moon rose in her fulness, and from a painted window in the chancel, many coloured streaks of light were poured down on the green grass. Gently they fell on the green grass. Gently the green grass received them on its soft bosom. And part of the painted window was open; so that a monument which was inside the church, near the altar, heard the talking of the graves, and said to himself—
“Behold, am I not the only monument inside the church? I am nobler than the rest of the graves which are outside. I will speak to them through

the fretwork of the painted window, and claim my right to be called the greatest." So he called proudly to the graves through the window, and said—"Behold, I have never spoken unto you till now ; but for this once I will demean myself so as to speak unto you. I am the monument of high birth. Quartered arms are graven about me. A marble knight sleeps at my foot : his armour hangs at my side. There is a vault beneath, where in high state lie the coffins of his posterity, the piled coffins of ages, each in their generation, each the sepulchre of noble blood. The last who died, did he not sit in the crimson pew which is near me ? Since then ye seek for the worthiest grave, give yourselves no further trouble, for I am the worthiest of you by many times !"

Thus spoke the monument of high birth ; but the old grave answered and said, "What is noble

blood to the worms? Is it more sweet for their repast? A chilly thing is thy marble compared with our green turf, which is gladdened by the south breeze. The last who was buried beneath thee is well remembered by us. Proud he was of his high descent, and despised his neighbour, the farmer, who was humbly born. No word would he speak to him. Nevertheless, when the angel of death came to both, which was the noblest then? Truly the farmer was the nobler of the two; for he shook hands with the angel without fear, while thy tenant shrunk back in dismay. Nobly to be born may be a great thing with man, but nobly to die is a greater thing with the graves. Inasmuch, then, as the poor farmer, because of his righteousness, died without fear, so much the more noble is his grave than thou. Keep, therefore, thy titles to thyself, and learn thy true value."

Thus answered the old grave ; but the monument of high birth was angered, and said to himself, “ I am sorry that I spoke to these churls. I will address them no more.”

And now the bats chased each other round the old tower. The birds chirped in their dreams, while the dead hour of midnight was tolled forth from the crazy clock. The rats crossed backwards and forwards. Wan lights flitted over the late made graves, and a thousand strains of soft melody, not to be heard by man, rose from the long waving grass, in the quiet of night, when the voice of a lonely grave, which lay apart from the rest of the graves, thus poured its complaint.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUICIDE'S GRAVE.

ALAS ! miserable grave that I am, set apart from the rest of the graves ! The nettles and nightshade crowd over me. The toads make me their habitation. The slimy lizards crawl about me. The grass grows on me rank and noisome. The dews refresh me not ; the angels visit me not. I am a solitary grave—the grave of a suicide ! All the other graves are holy ; but I am not holy. Over me was no prayer read as my tenant was committed to the dust. The minister came not with his white robes and his holy book. No crowd stood round with tears. I was dug in the

night, by the sexton, with his dusky lantern. In the night I received my tenant. The villagers cross the churchyard on the other side for fear of me. I am left alone in the damp of the churchyard to my own thoughts, for the other graves speak not with me." Thus cried the melancholy voice in the stillness of night, and surprised the other graves. Therefore they asked, who could tell the history of this sad grave? To which the old grave made answer from under the yew, and said, "My friends, three days after the lightning struck the tower was this grave made, the cause of which I have heard from the sexton; for one night a stranger came with him into the churchyard, and they two searched for this grave, and when they had found it, the sexton sate him down upon it, and told concerning the suicide. You must know, then, that he who so wickedly killed

himself, and was here buried, was the son of righteous parents, but took to evil ways in his youth. Evil companions he had, whom he loved better than his father or his mother. Oftentimes his mother spoke to him, calling him back ; but he would not listen. He forsook the church of his infancy. So his mother died of a broken heart, and he left his father in his old age, and crossed the seas to foreign countries, where he led a reckless life. Crimes untold were his. Ten times stained in guilt was his soul. At last God, who had borne with him a long time, left him to himself. What he did after this I know not ; but when many years had passed, and he came again to this village, so marked was his face with crime, that I remembered him not, albeit I had known him so well in the undutiful days of his youth. Much gold he brought with him when he

came back to this village ; but none would speak to him. So he went away again to some large city, where he lost all his money by gambling, and came back here and killed himself. Justly, then, is his grave without honour ; for it is the grave of guilt ten times stained—guilt unwashed by the tears of repentance. Oh, thou suicide ! if thou hadst but tried to repent !—if thou hadst but called back to remembrance thine early days, when thy mother led thee to the church, and gave thee a little prayer-book ! But now it is too late. There is no repentance in the grave !”

Thus spoke the old grave ; and all the other graves said, “Thou hast spoken well : the grave of guilt is without honour.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE ANGEL OF THE LITTLE SPRING TELLS HIS HISTORY.

Now there was a small spring in the churchyard, between the sun-dial and the old cross. A holy spring it was. Between two stones it rose, covered with short moss. The grass grew to its brink. At the bottom of it were many smooth round pebbles, seen clear. A pink hawthorn shaded it over. Hither, every morn and evening, the little maid, the orphan, brought her lamb to drink: a large lamb it was now; but when she found it on the hills it was young and small. Greatly she loved the lamb, and greatly the lamb loved her. A blue ribbon it had round its neck,



THE LITTLE MAID

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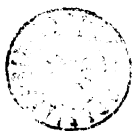
by which she led it about. And when the little maid brought her lamb to the spring, she brought along with her a pitcher also, which she filled morning and evening.

And the graves told the angel of the spring who the young maiden was that came with the lamb and the pitcher ; and the angel said, “ O, little maid ! thou art lovely as the seraphs. Thou art more delicate than the young drops of water, when they are first born. Sweeter water shalt thou have for thy pitcher than any other of the villagers. May it do good to thy grandfather, unto whom thou art so dutiful.” So the angel came up from his grotto every morning, and sate down under the hawthorn, and when the little maid came, he collected the choicest of his drops into her pitcher ; but the little maid knew it not.

And the graves said to the angel of the small

spring, "Tell us where is thy home, for we see thee seldom." And he answered, "Far away is my home in the inner parts of the earth, whence my spring comes. A fair grotto it is, shining with diamonds on all sides. My seat is there, made of soft moss; the long growth of ages. Cool it is in summer, and warm in winter. I love to dwell therein, keeping poisons away from mingling with the purity of my stream. But sometimes, as now, I rise up and sit on the short green grass under the hawthorn, watching the villagers come with their pitchers. They see me not. Time was when they revered my waters as a cure for disease. This honour they give me no more; yet still do they come hither for water rather than elsewhere, for my stream is pure as a young child which hath been just christened by it."

Thus answered the angel; but the graves said,





“ All this we know concerning thy spring ; but tell us what becomes of it, after it has trickled away from this churchyard, for in that we are ignorant.”

Then the angel answered and said, “ Have I not gone with the stream many miles from this place ? When it hath just left the churchyard, it falls over four smooth stones in a little cascade, and runs into the small brook which is below. There it is mingled with the other stream, but still do I know mine own drops. So these two streams continue in one, under sweet-scented willows, till they reach the spot where cresses grow. Hither oftentimes come the little children of the village with baskets, that they may gather the cresses. From this place the stream travels on for an hour, till it reaches a white bridge of wood, where alders hang over. Here are small fish darting about. Pleasant is the life which they lead among the roots. They are



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under my care. A little way from the white bridge, the brook joins another brook, and becomes a small river. Sweet-scented sedges grow thereabouts. White lilies float on the stream. The dragon-flies wander from lily to lily all the day long: their buzzing is sweet to mine ear. And the little river proceeds onwards for three hours, to a mill; after which it joins another little river, and they two together become a large river. This large river also have I followed, till it reaches the ocean, wherein it is lost; yet still do I know each drop of mine own spring."

And the graves answered and said, "Behold, thy stream is like to a man who is buried; for when he is buried, he mixes by degrees with the worms and the clay, and becomes a part of them; and the clay is turned over in time, and becomes rich earth, out of which grow the grass and the

trees, which also in their turn die away, and are scattered abroad by the four winds. Thus man, after the corruption of his body, mixes by degrees with the elements, as thy spring mixes with other waters. Yet do both, nevertheless, remain themselves ; for, as thou canst discern thine own drops in the ocean, even so are the parts of each man known among the elements, and shall be restored to him on a certain day. Then shall each put on a body incorruptible, and there shall be no more graves for ever and ever. This, indeed, we know not of ourselves, but the angels who know have told us ; for we asked of them why we were turned to the East, and they said unto us as we have said unto thee."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEGGAR'S GRAVE IS DESPISED BY THE OTHER
GRAVES.

AND the time came for the villagers to crown the graves with garlands, for it was the custom in that place. So they dressed themselves in their best, and brought flowers of many kinds from their gardens, and went to the graves of their friends and relations, and covered them with the flowers in remembrance of them. But the little maid took five flowers, from her own garden, and wove them into a garland for her mother's grave. And the five flowers were the rose, the violet, the narcissus, the honeysuckle, and the stock. For

she said to herself, " My mother's grave is unknown except to a few, like the violet which is hid. As the dead leaves of the rose smell sweetly, such is our remembrance of her. As the withered root of the narcissus grows up the next year, so shall she rise again. As for the stock and the honeysuckle, my mother loved the honeysuckle, but the stock was the favourite of my father."

And many graves were crowned, but the old grave was not crowned: and he said, " There is not one left who knows me; therefore am I not crowned: behold, the great-grandchildren of my tenant have been dead many years, and their children also are dead. They would crown me if they might. But it is forbidden to them. The dead have no flowers."

But there was one grave uncrowned, which had no great age for an excuse. So the other graves

despised it, and said, "Thou grave which liest in the corner, wherefore art thou among us without thy crown?"

And the grave answered humbly, and said, "Pity me, oh, my fellows! and despise me not. I am the grave of an aged beggar, who had no friend. He wandered far and wide in search of a home, but found it not till he came here. He was forsaken by the companions of his youth, whom he trusted in his young days. From the charity of those whom he knew not, he picked a scanty alms, for himself and his dog, who loved him exceedingly, and watched his steps. They slept together on the same straw: they eat of the same crust. His dog defended him from the idle boys. Thus he wandered about till he came hither, when they killed his dog; and on the seat, which is under the yew, he sat down and died: so he was buried



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here ; and I, his grave, am not crowned, because there was none who loved him save his dog. Albeit time was when he had a happy home, and children smiled round his fireside. Condemn me not, therefore, in that I want a garland ; for behold, also, how the angels already are crowning me with a garland of their own, because my tenant repined not at his condition, but bowed in all things to the will of his God."

Thus spoke the beggar's grave: and the graves looked through the twilight, and beheld the angels crowning the beggar's grave with fresh flowers from heaven. And all said, " We despise the beggar's grave no longer ; it hath been crowned by angels."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ANGELS OF SPRING AND SUMMER TAKE THEIR
DEPARTURE.

AND the little maid worked a cushion for her grandfather, whereon to kneel at church; and she drew a picture of the church, and hung it up over his chair, and she said, "It is for my brother when he comes back from sea; I shall be happy when he comes back. We will dig the garden afresh. He will bring me seeds from foreign countries."

And many graves spoke, and claimed to be the most worthy: but the graves could not decide. And summer passed away, and time came for the

angels of spring and summer to depart. So the graves sang to them, and said, "Ye are going away, O angels! ye are going away to Heaven. Many thanks to you for your sweet converse. We were chilled by the winter winds. Our grass was stiff with cold. Ye came down from Heaven singing on your way. We heard your voice many days before. Ye brought a warm breath from Paradise, a warm breath, laden with pleasant incense. Sweetly it stole over us like the voice of distant bells. The flowers one by one rose up before it, each from its little grave. Ye unfolded smoothly their leaves, and emptied the water from their cups when they drooped with rain. The grass became green round the graves. Melancholy had been our abode but for you. Ye gave a cheerful face to the house of death. Ye made a garden over the dead bones, a pleasant garden

wherein the insects hum busily, and the little children play together."

So the angels of spring and summer went their way with the first mists of morn, and were succeeded by the angels of autumn, who came on the early sun-beams. And the graves rested from their dispute for a while; silence fell on the churchyard; deep silence, as is the silence of death. But man knew not that the graves had been talking concerning him, and said in his heart, "I may do as I please. All secrets are buried in the tomb. There is no witness in the grave."

END OF THE FIRST PART.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANGELS OF AUTUMN.

AND the angels of autumn went about, and ripened, with their breath, the fruits which the angels of summer had put forth; so the corn grew yellow in the fields, and the apple-trees bent with their burden. But of all the buds which the angels of spring had reared into blossom, not one half were swelled into ripe fruit by the angels of autumn; for many had died by the blight, and many by the winds, and many by the rains. And

the graves were pleased with the angels of autumn while they ripened the berries ; but in a little while, they began also to take away the leaves from the trees in the churchyard. This thing displeased the graves, so they spoke to the angels, and said, “ Have we not oftentimes asked you to spare the leaves in this churchyard, but ye would not hear ? Spare them this once, we beseech you.”

But the angels of autumn answered, “ O ye graves, it is not ours to do what we will with the leaves ; we are the ministers of Providence. Nevertheless, we have not forgotten our agreement with you in times past ; therefore, for your sakes, we will spare the old yew as we have done heretofore : for we remember how, in the earliest days, it was agreed between us that the yew should be left its leaves. Likewise we will spare the holly and the cypress ; for the holly is hallowed for Christmas,

and the cypress is already clothed in mourning ; but the leaves of the other trees we must take." So the angels of autumn went day by day round the churchyard, and loosened the leaves of the other trees. They spared not even the weeping willow, but loosened her leaves the first of all the trees. And each angel had a wonderful small brush, made of sunbeams, with which he painted his own leaf day by day, from the colours of the rainbow. And the leaf changed from green to pale, and from pale to yellow, and from yellow to red ; and when the leaf was become red, then the angel took it in his hand, and carried it down softly to the earth, where it was blown to and fro by the winds till it crumbled away, and became a part of the soil. And next to the weeping-willow, the beech was laid bare ; and next to the beech the elm ; and next to the elm the oak : and man

saw not the angels, but said in his ignorance, "It is the order of nature." Then came the gossamer spiders and dropped their webs on the naked branches, their webs glittering with the pearls of morn ; but the wild bees forsook the shrubs, and went back to their hole in the wall. The birds ceased to sing among the boughs. Sad was the look of the leafless trees, all but the hawthorn, for the hawthorn was decked with red berries, like a new summer. And the graves said, "Our grass is growing rank ; it is covered with the decay of things. The little spring is choked with floating leaves. Melancholy is autumn to the graves ; melancholy to the graves and to man : for then death walks hand-in-hand with sickness through the village. They mingle together in the evening breeze, and lurk in the mists of morn."

CHAPTER II.

THE GRAVE OF BEAUTY.

Not far from the church porch there was a grave called "the grave of Beauty." A pleasant grave it was, and cool in the shade when the summer heats were about; but now it was loaded with dying leaves: the birds no more sang over it. And the grave of beauty said, "My friends, you have well nigh forgotten our dispute; I pray you, consider my claim. Am I not the most worthy of you, inasmuch as I contain beauty beneath me buried? What is so valued on earth as this? Wealth is nought in comparison of it. She was beautiful who sleeps beneath me. Who shall tell

her fairness? The lily might not vie with her. The smile of her face was more pleasant than spring. She is mine now : her beauty is my possession. Give me, therefore, the glory."

Thus spoke the grave of beauty ; but the old grave answered from under the yew, and said, " My friends, I well remember her. Truly, she was beautiful ; but what is beauty, if it be found alone ? It is a fair flower, which hath no scent. This beautiful one was undutiful in her life time : when her mother was ill, she did not nurse her. She cared not for her young sisters. She was vain of her own beauty, and neglected better things. When she came to church she did not pray, but looked about her. Now she is dead ; and of what value is her beauty ? It can do her no good. The worms have made loathsome her ruby lip. Her brow of alabaster has been shrivelled up at

their touch. If we must have beauty, give us the beauty which lives through the grave; the beauty of holy faith and deeds, blooming fair with the tints of immortality."

Thus spoke the old grave, and the grave of beauty was silent. Then the old grave said, "How much better is the little maid, who is so dutiful to her grandfather? She nursed her mother when she was ill. She loves her brother who is at sea. Sad she is that he does not come back. She visits the sick old alms-woman, that she may read the prayer-book to her. Her grave shall be blessed ten times above the grave of beauty. Let her come to us soon; we will take care of her."

CHAPTER III.

THE GRAVES OF TWO ENEMIES.

CLOSE by the grave of beauty were the graves of two enemies, lying side by side. So when the old grave had done speaking, they spoke to the other graves, and said, "Behold, there lie beneath us two enemies, who, in their life-time, hated one another with a deadly hatred. They would never speak one to the other. Now they lie side by side. Their bones crumble into one. They embrace more and more, like loved brothers. They are partners in the maggots and the worms. This is our doing. We have caused them to shake hands in the grave. Are we not, then, worthy of

honour among you? For the most of you dissever friendships; but as for us, behold, we have joined enemies." Thus spoke the two graves. But the old grave answered, and said, "In that ye have joined enemies, ye do greatly show forth the power of the grave. But, nevertheless, in respect of those whom ye cover, I pray you, what better were they than fools? Short is the life of man; shorter his season of gladness. He hath but a few moments for love and friendship, and in a little while is no more. How great, then, is his folly, in making his days bitter with hatred, when he hath so short a time for love? Wiser far is the idiot, who comes to this churchyard in summer that he may bask in the sun; for he loves all things. Let the bones of enemies crumble together in the grave, if they will: but, behold! if they had but well known the shortness of their

days, they would have shaken hands before this time." Thus spoke the old grave, and the other graves agreed with him, and said, "It is too late for hatred to become love in the grave. If men would be friends, let them join hands before they come hither. Their bones may crumble into one dust, but who shall alter the guilt of their hatred?"

Thus spoke the graves. And now the storm swept across the churchyard. The leaves whirled round and round. Clouds hid the face of heaven. No star was seen, save the polar star: and the graves sang to the polar star, and said, "Oh, polar star! we love thee beyond other stars. Thou changest not with the rest: thou art true to thy place in all times. We know where to look for thee. Thy constancy is as the constancy of a Christian. Pleasant is thy ray to us, as it shines

over the old cross. Have not the angels told us, that thou and thy companions are each a world? Doubtless, the other worlds are like to this world in wavering. But sure we are that thy world is more steady than other worlds, where a happy race dwell, who know no change." And the graves listened to the shrill wind as it blew, and they said, "Hark to the autumn wind as it chimes through the old church! Sad is its sound. Let us listen to the music of the grey tower, which is its harp. Is it not the dirge of summer? The raven croaks on his bough. He can find no sleep. But to man, most of all, is the strain sad. Does it not tell him how perishable is the blossom of life? How his friends and his hopes must drop away one by one. How he can be sure of nought, but of resting some day in our cells."

And the graves pitied man, and grieved exceedingly for him; that all his hopes were the children of day, when each might have been the parent of eternity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANGEL OF MEMORY.

Now there was an angel who dwelt in the churchyard, called the angel of memory. Her business it was to take care of the tombs, lest they should be forgotten by man. Therefore, when any person came alone into the churchyard, straightway she brought something to his mind concerning one who had died. And after this thought she brought on other thoughts tied by viewless chains, till there stood before him many scenes of his life, which had long passed away.

So on the next day, when the old man, the grandfather of the little maid, had sat down alone

on the seat under the yew, listening in his blindness to the dirge of the wind, the angel of memory stole to him unperceived, and whispered in his ear softly, "Shall I show to thee some past scenes concerning those who are no more?" But the old man had fallen asleep on his seat, for the warm sun had come out for a little while, and he answered in his dream, and said, "Behold, I have travelled far, and my journey is nigh at an end. Let me behold my life from the beginning, till my daughter died, and was buried here."

Then the angel of memory took up gently the soul of the old man, and carried it away into a distant country, to a small dell by the sea side: and the dell was full of trees, in the midst of which was a little white house. And the angel took the old man, and placed him at a green gate which led to the lawn before the house. And he

looked at the house, and beheld very plain the large China rose which nearly covered it. Presently, as he gazed, behold! the door opened, and there came out a little child drawing a small cart, but the little child's hand was fast round the finger of its young mother, who smiled pleasant. Then spoke the old man, and said to the angel, "O angel! I remember well the face of the young mother, but the little child I know not." And the angel answered, "That little child is thyself as thou wast in times past. Long hath the young mother been dead, and behold, the little child is a grey-headed man."

Then the angel took the old man by the hand, and led him away from the green gate to a small beach, where he beheld four children picking up shells, the eldest of whom he saw to be himself, but the three others were his two sisters and one

brother. Many shells they picked up, but prized the pink shells most of all, and next to them the white shells. And when one of them found a better shell than common, the others ran to see it. He observed, also, how his youngest sister collected sea weeds for him. But as for himself, as the tide came up, he saw how he took some stones, and made a heap, and stood on it, till he was surrounded by water, clapping his hands the while.

And the old man turned to the angel, and said, "Thou hast shown me the truth. Such was I in those days. Show me myself again at another time."

So the angel carried him away from those parts, to a long room filled with boys, wherein he beheld himself seated at a narrow table, turning diligently the leaves of a book. Presently he saw

the boys leave the room, and go into a field, and begin to play. And the old man looked earnestly, and beheld how, of all that played, he himself played the merriest, when of a sudden there came a carriage, and he was put in and carried back to the little white house in the dell. But the windows of the house were shut ; for his little sister, who had collected sea-weeds for him, was dead ; and he saw how he went up to the coffin, and kissed her, and wept bitterly.

And the old man became sick at heart, and said to the angel, "Take me away from this scene to some other. Let me not weep a second time, for the blest companion of my young days."

So the angel brought him to a house in a narrow street, where, in a dark murky room, he beheld his other sister, and his mother, and his

brother. And the old man turned to the angel, and said, "Where is my father that he is not here? This house is not so pleasant as the house of my infancy." But the angel answered, "Thy father was dead at this time. Greatly didst thou grieve for him when he died."

And while the old man looked at his sister, and his mother, and his brother, the door opened; and a young man, like to what himself had been, came into the room. And the young man put a purse into his mother's hand, and said, "I am getting on well. My labour shall make you comfortable."

So his mother kissed him, and his sister kissed him, and his brother shook his hand, and thanked him exceedingly. All this pleased the old man to see, and he would have stayed to behold himself longer this time, but the angel took him away,

and led him to a pleasant house on a hill. And there was an harbour near the house. And he looked, and beheld himself seated in the harbour with a young maiden. And the young maiden was fair exceedingly, like to the little maid his grand-daughter. And the old man said, "This is her whom I married. Well do I remember those times."

And the angel took him by the hand, and led him away to many other scenes, which were pleasant and painful by turns. But when he had seen all, he said, "O angel of memory! thou hast shown me much to no purpose; for now that I have seen all, I am not the more happy. Behold! where is now my wife? And where are my children? Where are my father and my mother? My brother and my sisters? Thou canst not give me them back. Thou hast shown them to

me for a little while only, that I might be the more wretched."

But the angel of memory answered, "Behold! I am nothing without my sister, the angel of hope. She is nothing without me, and I am nothing without her. Ask of her, and she will give thee back thy wife and thy children, thy father and thy mother, thy sisters and thy brother. The past is mine, but hers is the future, wherein she hath garnered, and keepeth safe, every pleasant thing which time hath taken away, whether love or other treasures. All these shall be restored tenfold to the good, when they wake to the second life."

Thus spoke the angel to the old man: and he awoke, and the little maid led him back to his cottage. And he sat down in his arm-chair, and the little maid put her arms round his neck, and

kissed him. So he kissed her, also, and said within himself, "What the angel said was true. I will hope in the future, since I may not rejoice in the past." And he was happy from that day.

But the little maid said to herself, "Why was my grandfather sad at the sound of the wind? Doubtless, he feared for my brother, who is at sea." And she went into her little room, and knelt down by her bed, and prayed, and said, "Oh, God! let my brother come back safe. Let him not die in the sea, as my father died. Preserve his ship on the salt waters."

CHAPTER V.

THE GRAVE OF GLORY.

AND there was a grave by the path, over which grew a weeping willow. So when evening came, this grave spoke, and said, " My friends, listen to what I shall say ; so shall you judge me to be the best of you all. I am the grave of glory. My tenant died on the battle-field, in the height of honour. He fell on grass crimson with gore. Remember ye not how, a century back, the two armies met near this village? Long had been their march in search of one another. They met a mile down the stream. The carrion birds flocked round them. Their banners glittered in the sun.



THE WARRIOR

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Shrill was the voice of their trumpets. The young and old fell side by side : but of all that fell on that day, there was none so great as he who sleeps beneath me, though his tomb is without pride, and a simple willow bends over him. His comrades buried him with muffled drums. His wife came a month after, and planted the willow. Oh, great is the glory of the battle-field, and greater, therefore, am I who cover that glory!"

Thus spoke the grave of glory, whose words were scarce done, when a confused voice, as of many graves huddled together, broke the stillness, and the voice said, " Behold ! we are a number of graves in one, and conceal the soldiers of the common herd, who died on that battle-field, and without whom no glory had been gained. They were buried in layers side by side, and their names are unknown ; therefore do strangers pass

over us, to visit the single grave of glory. But, Oh graves! do ye be more just than they. Consider how each of our tenants no less died than the tenant of the single grave, and was wept by no fewer tears."

Thus spoke the confused voice; but the graves answered, — "Behold! ye are both unworthy. What is the glory which ye talk of? Have not the angels told us that God respects not earthly glory? And when, on Easter morn, they sing in company the song of Redemption, behold! they tell us not of the battle-field, but of peace—peace everlasting, in happy bowers, where dwells the smile of the Almighty—where the blest do sit on soft grass of the emerald, beside pure rivers, in a second garden of Eden. Whereas, then, they and their banners are rotten, and their high hopes perished for ever; tell us no more of their glory,

which was vain, nor of their honour, which is laid in the dust."

Thus answered the graves; but the old grave said,—“ Well do I remember him who lies in the grave of glory. He was the son of one who was the minister here many years ago. His father would have had him also to be a minister, like himself; but he chose the wars instead. He left his peaceful home; for idle glory he gave up the bliss of doing good to his fellows. Behold, how strange a being is man! What are we to understand of him? He makes a serious matter of vain things; he cherishes hatred instead of love; he toils for fruits which perish, but regards not the fruits which bloom for ever. Why communes he not with us? We are his true counsellors, who know not of fickleness or change. O man! thou that art born to die, yet diest to live, listen to us,

thy still monitors. We tell thee of thy decay ; we call thee from the fever of life to meditate on life's true value. We are thy true home ; we are the harbour of many sorrows, the mourner's solace, the resting-place of the broken-hearted. Deck us not with vain ornaments, but listen to our voice. I have heard also how some are buried in the ocean ; but pleasanter far than the waters is the green hillock, which knows no storm."

Thus spoke the old grave concerning man, and mourned for him grievously ; for he considered how sad it was that he should fix his hopes on things that perish, when there was set before him the bud of immortality.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT SCHOLAR'S GRAVE.

AND twilight was coming down fast ; the sun was gone to his pavilion ; so the graves sang to the angel of Twilight, and said,—“ Soft is thy step as the falling mist ; we hear it not. Stealthily thou comest on. The angels close up things at thine approach. Grey thou art as an old tower. The bats know thy coming, and leave their nests under the church-eaves, that they may fly round and round. The water-crickets chirp from the river. Thy sister, the angel of Night, follows in thy step. Pleasant is twilight to the graves.”

Thus sang the graves ; and when they had

ended, behold ! from behind the ivy which clustered round the church-tower, there spoke a voice, and said :—

“ My friends, I am the monument of a great scholar. His name is graven on my tablet, but the envious ivy hath hidden it, and I am known to the sexton alone. My tenant knew more than any other man ; the languages of all nations were opened to him ; he measured the course of the stars ; and no flower was hid from him. The wisdom of the past was his ; he knew the histories of all cities ; he drew forth the mysteries of nature, and fathomed the mind of man. Many were the books which he wrote. Now he sleeps beneath me. Give me, therefore, the glory.” Thus spoke the great scholar’s grave ; but the old grave answered, and said :—

“ My friends, when this man was alive, he was

exceedingly proud of his learning, and despised the humbly ignorant. He spoke not to the villagers, when he walked in the fields. He lived alone in a large house, surrounded with many thousand books; and in a cottage near him there was a poor man, with his wife and children; but the poor man had only one book;—a Bible it was—an old Bible, which his grandfather gave him. And when the poor man had done his work, he sat down with his wife and children, and read out of it in the evening; each read a verse in turn, from the oldest to the youngest, believing what was written. And I spoke to the angels, and said, ‘Which is the best, the poor man with one Bible, or the learned man with ten thousand books?’ Thus did I speak to the angels, who answered, and said,—‘How askest thou this thing? Knowest thou not that there is but one book in heaven?’

and that book the poor man hath got. So the poor man with his Bible, is greater than the rich man with all his proud learning.' This thing did the angels teach me at that time. How, then, shall we give honour to the great scholar's grave? Man may covet the idle treasure of earthly wisdom; but we the graves, know better. We know that it is vain as dust to the tenant of the tomb."

Thus spoke the old grave, and the little grave said,—“ My friends, I have watched the little maid go by daily, for many weeks, that she may learn the Bible. To school she goes, with a small Bible in her hand. Very diligent she is; the angels love her.”

Thus spoke the little grave: and now the evening star had sunk behind the tower; pale streaks of crimson painted the eastern clouds, and

stragglers from the village going to their work, whistled in the rising morn. So silence fell on the graves, and their voices gave place to the merry sounds of waking day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SWALLOWS DEPART AND THE ANGELS OF WINTER
COME.

AND it was time for the swallows to depart ; so the angels went to them, and whispered in their ears softly while they slept, “ Behold, if you do not soon depart, you will have no food left for you. Your young ones are grown up in your mud nests ; they are ready for the pilgrimage. Some of us will go before you, and lead the way to the warm countries.”

So the swallows collected together on the top of the old tower, waiting till all were come. And when all were met, they flew round it three times

and went on their way. In the evening they went away, as the sun sank down; and the graves bade them farewell, and said, "A pleasant pilgrimage to you, ye birds who have been our companions through the summer months! Your nests will be safe till you come back; the sparrows shall not take them. Long is the journey before you, but strong and swift are your wings; you will not pause till you reach the warm lakes of a strange clime. There you will find a home deep in untrodden forests, where the trees grow at will. In the clefts of the rocks you will live. For the church bells you will have tinkling waterfalls; lone desolate glens for the farmer's field. Fare ye well in your voyage over the salt seas. Thus, also, departs the Christian in search of his promised land. He sees not its green valleys, he scents not its precious streams; but in faith he

goes, knowing that he shall reach it some day, though the waves of death roll beneath him, and nought stretches above, but the broad sky of eternity."

Then the angels of autumn spoke to the graves, and said, "We also must go, that the angels of winter may come. Behold! the fruits are gathered up. The corn is stowed in the barn. The leaves are shed, so that the branches are bare. We have done the business which was set us by Providence; we have prepared earth for the winter season. The juices are gone back to the roots, where they will lurk safe till spring comes."

So the angels of autumn went their way, and the angels of winter came in their stead. And first they spread but a thin gauze of ice over the ponds at night-time, which the morning sun presently dissolved; then by degrees they made the

ice thicker and thicker, so that the little boys began to slide upon it. The earth also they made hard, and stiffened the grass with a polished covering; but as for the churchyard, they spread day by day a white film over the small twigs on its trees. They whitened the roof of the church with a hoary mantle, and caused long veins of ice to trickle down from its edges. Then they said, "Behold! we have decked the earth in her new raiment. We have locked things up safe, that they may spring up with more health in their due season. It remains that we make a house for ourselves."

So they became very small of their own accord, and went to the place where the little spring stream trickled down the stones, out of the churchyard. There they worked all night long, and behold! in the morning, there was a beautiful

grotto in that place; a fair grotto, built upon round pillars. Icy net-work roofed it over. The green grass shone through. Never was such grotto built, by all the cunning of man. Nevertheless, they did not stay there for a long time together, but oftentimes went abroad into the air, and caught the young drops of rain in their hands, and shaped them into flakes, and brought them wavering to the ground. Thousands of flakes they brought down; but all were of the same shape, like small stars dropped from heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PATRIOT'S GRAVE.

AND the snow was curled into many figures as it fell ; but upon one grave, as it fell, it grew into a crown—a white crown of virgin purity. So when night came, the graves spoke to the grave with the white crown, and said, “ Who art thou ? Art thou the grave of a martyr, that thou shouldest have a crown ? ” But the grave answered, “ My friends, I am the grave of a patriot. He cared not for glory ; he cared not for wealth ; but for his country he cared greatly. What can compare with the love of one's father-land ? Is not heaven the father-land of the angels ? and they love it.

Thus did my tenant love his father-land. So when it was in trouble he considered not his own toil ; when it was in danger, he regarded not his own life. Therefore is his name highly honoured among men. And I am called the patriot's grave: to whom, therefore, give ye esteem, and settle for ever that I am the most worthy of you."

Thus spoke the patriot's grave. But the other graves answered and said, "In that thy tenant greatly died for his country, we dispute not thy greatness. Precious is the glory of that death, for it is the glory of a few. Therefore, through all ages, shalt thou be esteemed a worthy grave, but not the worthiest. For hath not man two countries? of which the first is on earth; the second in heaven. As heaven, then, is more worthy than earth, so is to die for heaven more worthy than to die for earth. Thus die the good christians of

these days: thus died the saints of old. Nevertheless thou shalt keep thy crown, and when it melts, may emeralds spring from its drops; for second only to the grave of a Christian is the grave of the true patriot; and if we find not among us a true Christian's grave, then shalt thou be proclaimed the greatest of us all."

Thus spoke the graves; and the grave of the patriot was still.



CHAPTER IX.

THE GRAVE OF FRIENDSHIP.

Now there had been a funeral in the churchyard of a young man, three weeks before ; and when the graves had ceased speaking, behold ! in the dead of night, the friend of the young man came and stood by his grave, and said, “ How unjust is the grave ! It leaves the wicked to their delights. It spares the hoary head ; but, behold ! it hath taken my friend away—my friend, who was good and young ; who had pleasant hopes before him ; who was beloved by all, but by me the most. How happy were the walks which we took together, talking of many things ! Sometimes we were

serious, and sometimes we were gay. We told our plans one to another. Thou wert better than I, oh! my friend; yet didst thou love me! Once only was I angry with thee, and when I returned for forgiveness, thou wert a corpse! Sudden was thy death. I could not believe that thou wast dead for many days: now I press thy grave. Cold and cheerless it is; but thou feelest it not. Nevertheless, when last I visited a grave, thou wast with me. Thou didst talk concerning it; what a pleasant place it was, and how quiet its abode."

Thus spoke the friend of the young man, and cast himself on the grave, and went his way. But when he was gone, the grave of the young man spoke to the other graves, and said, "My friends, give to the grave of friendship the place of the most worthy. What is the earth without friend-

ship? It is the holy balm which was saved from Eden. Scarce it is in these latter days."

Thus spoke the grave of friendship, and the other graves decided that it was of the same worth with the grave of love.

Then the old grave said, "I remember well the two friends. They deemed that there was no end to their friendship. They promised themselves many days. Alas! for the friendships of earth, if they be not cemented in heaven also. Perishable is the fruit of their joy. They last for a few years, and are no more. How much better is it to have Christ for a friend, whose friendship consoles in death, and his love gives light to the grave."

CHAPTER X.

THE LITTLE MAIDEN FALLS ILL.

THEN spoke the little grave, and said, " My friends, what is become of the little maiden, the orphan, that we have not seen her for four days ?" Thus asked the little grave, and no grave could answer ; but a strange angel had come into the churchyard—a strange angel, whom the graves knew not. So they spoke to the angel, and said, " Knowest thou aught of the little maid ?" And the strange angel answered, " O ye graves, I know the little maid well. Am not I her good angel, who take care of her, because she is good ? Behold ! she is very ill. She went to visit the old

sick alms-woman, and, as she came back, the night damp entered her flesh. She lies in her little bed. Her grandfather sits at her side. I know not but she may die."

Thus spoke the angel, when, behold! in the stillness of night the death-knell sounded from the church tower. Slowly it tolled—slowly pulled the old sexton. Then said the graves, "Is it not a toll for the little maiden? She is dead. Sad will her grandfather be: very sad her brother, when he comes back from the salt seas. But as for the little maiden herself, for her we grieve not. Christ was her friend: He will take care of her."

But the old grave said, "My friends, I have been in this churchyard many years, and well do I know the sound of the knells. Behold! the knell which ye have heard, it is not the knell of a little

maid, but of an old woman. Let us wait till the funeral ; then shall we know."

Thus spoke the old grave. So the graves waited for the funeral ; and, behold ! when it came, it was the funeral, not of the little maid, but of the old alms-woman. Slowly it came, for old men carried the coffin ; old alms-women walked behind. Shallow was the grave ; and when it was filled up with earth, then came six charity children, dressed in white, and sang over it a hymn, which the old alms-woman had taught them beforehand, that they might sing it over her. So the funeral ended, and the graves said to the new grave, " Welcome, thou new grave ; soon will the grass grow green over thee. Soon will the old alms-woman be forgotten : her funeral will be no more remembered by the idle children of men."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GRAVE OF A BROTHER AND SISTER.

AND it was so cold that the birds did not appear. So the graves were cheerless without a song; when, behold! there came a little robin, and hopped about the churchyard as though it waited for some one. It hopped about, and sang to the graves a merry song, like the voice of Spring. But the graves said, "Art not thou the little bird which covered the babes with leaves? We love thee for thy tameness. What waitest thou for?" And there was a little thick grave near the grave of the old alms-woman, which answered, and said, "This is the robin which

had its nest in this churchyard in Spring. Its nest was in the small briar which grows near me. Have I not heard of a brother and sister who came daily to see the eggs? The sister feared to frighten the birds, but the brother walked up to the nest. When the young ones were fledged, the brother and sister came together hand in hand, and brought crumbs. The old robin knew them well, and waited for their coming. Doubtless he is come again to be fed, as he was fed in Spring. See ye not how he hops about the small briar? But his chirping is vain now. The brother and sister will feed him no more; for, behold! a little while after the nestlings were flown, they were taken ill with a fever, and died, and were buried together in one grave. The nestlings are flown. They are grown to their full size. They will build a nest, each one for himself, when Spring comes

again; but the brother and sister are buried beneath me. The chirping of the birds shall delight them no more, till they wake in the groves of Paradise."

Thus spoke the small grave, and the robin came for four days. Each day it came, and went to the place where the brother and sister had fed it, where now was their little grave. And on the fifth day it flew away, and was seen no more. Then spoke the grave of the brother and sister, and said, "My friends, the robin has shown you which is the most worthy grave. Is it not myself? What can compare with the love of a brother for a sister, or of a sister for a brother? It is like to the love of angels. Consider these twins, how they were nursed together from the beginning; their sports were common as they grew up together. Give me then the glory, for I am their grave."

So the graves declared that the grave of the brother and sister was very worthy; next in worth to the mother's grave; and they said, "It is well for brothers and sisters to love one another, even as these two children loved. Let them love dearly while they may. Soon will years part them. They will form new friendships as they grow up. They will live in distant places. They will yearn for the love of their early days; but it will be given to them no more!"

Thus answered the graves, and many other graves spoke concerning their worth, each claiming to be the most worthy. And winter went on, but the graves could not fix on the worthiest. Scarce was true piety; as on earth scarce, so also scarce among the tenants of the tomb.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

AND the old grave perceived how winter was passing away, yet the graves had not settled which was the worthiest. So he spoke, and said, "My friends, I have contrived a way whereby ye shall discover the most worthy. I will speak to the Archangel, who comes hither this eve, and he shall decide for us ; for, behold ! is not this eve Christmas Eve, the eve of all eves, which angels and men keep together ?" So the graves agreed to what the old grave said, and sang thus in honour of Christmas Eve—" Sacred is the Eve of Christmas ; sacred to the angels and to man.

Already hath the holly been cut : the church is green with it. Wherefore hath the holly been cut? Wherefore is the church green? Because it is the eve of Christ's birth, when the world grew green again ; for it was old with years and crime. But when Christ came, the evergreens sprang up before him. Glory to the holly which grew up on that day ! It is the same through all seasons. Its leaves are not seared by the winter winds. They are prickly and bright. The beasts of the field touch them not. It grows in stony places. Its berries are round and red. Thick they cluster that they may do honour to Christmas. They are revered by angels."

When the graves had sung thus, they waited for the Archangel to come with his host : nor long did they wait, for presently, in the soft rays of the moon, with low melodies hovering about

them, there came down angels in multitude infinite, with their Archangel in the midst. Bright was their presence, though man saw it not. They filled the churchyard with peace. Then spoke the Archangel, and said, "Am I not the Archangel of this church? All hail to you, ye graves! and thou, church, all hail! The other angels are keeping Christmas in heaven; but we said, 'We will keep Christmas in the churchyard, which is our charge.' Is all quiet, O ye graves? Hath your rest been undisturbed?" Thus spoke the Archangel; but the old grave answered, "O Archangel, our rest is quiet as ever. Calm are the graves at all times. Nevertheless, a dispute hath of late risen among us, as to which of us is the most worthy; and, behold! the year is passing away, yet have we not decided. Tell us what we should do." And the Archangel answered, "When we have kept Christmas, you

shall know." So the angels made ready for Christmas-day ; and when morn rose, they sang in its honour. Christ they sang. Christ born ; Christ crucified ; and Christ rising again. And the Archangel said, " Well · do I remember those times, and how we sang to the shepherds."

Thus did the angels keep Christmas with man ; but man knew it not. And when they were going away, the old grave cried to the Archangel, and said, " Remember thy promise, concerning the most worthy grave. We wait thy bidding." Unto whom the Archangel answered, " Behold where the first snow-drop shall spring up in the new year ; that is the most worthy grave."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SNOW-DROP AND THE MOST WORTHY GRAVE.

WHEN the graves heard this, they considered that the archangel had spoken well. So they waited in patience. But the grave of the rich man, and the grave of high birth, and the grave of glory, took pride again in their hearts, and said, "Sure we are, that we shall be judged the worthiest. Upon us will the snow-drop spring up first."

So day and night passed on: and the angels of winter covered the churchyard thick with snow. All the graves were hid. Patiently they waited till a thaw should come: and when the thaw came

they looked about, but could see no snow-drop. For three days they looked, and saw nought; but on the fourth day, behold! there was a snow-drop on a lowly despised grave which lay in a corner, and was neglected by the other graves. No tombstone it had, and no tree by its side. So the graves were astonished among themselves, and said, "Why is the lowly grave exalted above us all? What hath it done that it should be so honoured? Let us speak to it." So they asked of the despised grave, who answered, and said, "My friends, I cannot tell you this thing. Ask of the angel of the sabbath, who lives among us. Doubtless, he knows, for his wisdom is great."

Then the graves cried to the angel of the sabbath, and said, "Tell us why the despised grave is preferred to the rest of us, that we may honour it duly." And the angel of the sabbath answered,

“Have ye forgotten the beggar’s grave, which was crowned by angels, when man had not crowned it? This is the beggar’s grave. Much sorrow was his in his lifetime, but he did not complain. He was deserted by the friends of his young days, but remembered that he had a friend who knew no change. His faith held fast in adversity. He knelt to his prayers on the cold stone; silent in his affliction, silent before his Saviour. Therefore, when he died, he was taken whither Lazarus went before him; and this, his grave, is honoured with a snow-drop rather than the other graves.”

Thus spoke the angel of the sabbath, whom the other graves answered, and said, “It is a just judgment. Let the beggar’s grave be honoured from this time. The grave of wealth shall hide his head. The grave of glory shall boast no more. Our dispute is ended. Welcome thou, young

snow-drop. White thou art as the virgin snow.
Thou bringest pleasant tidings of spring."

So the graves gave honour to the beggar's grave,
and it was exalted above all the graves from that
time.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

AND when the graves had given honour to the beggar's grave, they spoke to it, and said, "Tell us what grave we must honour next to thee, and for thy sake we will honour it." And the beggar's grave answered, "No kin have I: I am a solitary grave. Let the mother's grave, the mother of the little maiden, be honoured next to me. Also, when the grandfather and grand-daughter die, let their graves be honoured along with the mother's grave. What is so pleasant as a Christian family, joined together in one hope, under the same turf?"

So the dispute of the graves was ended. And





THE LITTLE MAID'S BROTHER RETURNS FROM SEA

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the little maid got well. And her brother came back from sea : and spring came again with its angels : and flowers sprang up anew in the churchyard. But of all the graves, no grave was so fair as the beggar's grave : for with the sweetest of wild flowers the angels planted it about. They guarded it by day and by night, and ministered it with early dew. And the little maiden was happy, and her grandfather was happy, and her brother went to sea no more.

So the graves sang for the last time, and said, " What can compare with religion ? It is the only treasure which is not lost in the grave. Pleasant is the end of the righteous. They join their friends in another world. There shall the sister and the brother meet again. The mother shall kiss her young babe. The father and daughter shall shake hands. The orphan shall be an orphan

no more. There shall be no graves in those times; no graves, and no death; no death, and no sin. Happy are the children of God. Paradise is their portion, and their bliss shall know no change."

THE END.

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